

A CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CAPITAL IN BARCELONA

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THE excavation of Anicia Juliana's church of St. Polyeuktos at Saraçhane in Istanbul has yielded a remarkable group of architectural sculpture, which is distinguished both by its technical quality and by the wide range of naturalistic and exotic motifs.¹ The material is Proconnesian marble, which was conveyed from the quarries roughly blocked out; that the detailing was done on the site is shown by the masons' chippings and openwork cores which made up the packing of the nave floor, and that it was done when the marble elements were already erected is shown by the fact that concealed parts were sometimes left unfinished. The church is securely dated to the reign of Justin I, and its sculpture casts a wholly new light on the antecedents of Justinianic carving as exemplified a decade later in St. Sophia. The preliminary reports on the Saraçhane excavation have included photographs of the principal pieces which have survived in recognizable form, and these, in their almost baroque variety and exuberance, show a marked contrast with the more restrained repertory of St. Sophia. Recent work, however, on the many thousands of small, mainly unidentified fragments from Saraçhane has vindicated for St. Polyeuktos another major piece, which is very much closer to work in St. Sophia and indicates that (as one might have expected but contrary to some indications) the same "school" was employed in both churches.

In 1964 H. Schlunk commented perceptively on the affinity between a large, richly decorated capital in the Barcelona Archaeological Museum and two capitals and their piers (the so-called 'pilastri acri-

tani') in the Piazzetta in Venice.² In the same year excavation at Saraçhane produced a pier capital identical to those in Venice, and it was suggested that Constantinople, and in particular the church of St. Polyeuktos, was the source of the pair in Venice. This hypothesis was later substantiated by the discovery of many fragments at Saraçhane exactly corresponding with the capitals and piers in Venice.³

In 1969 I had the opportunity to examine the capital in Barcelona and suggested then that it might in fact come from the same church.⁴ Further study at Saraçhane in 1971 and 1972 has confirmed this.

The capital (Museum no. 7542, figs. 1-3) is of Proconnesian marble, its height 0.92, lower diameter 0.57-0.58, and abacus 0.965 m. square. Its base molding is decorated with large eggs (each with a Latin cross in relief) alternating with erect trilobate leaves, which are linked by a stem passing beneath the eggs. The crown molding is decorated with a row of trilobate plants, each lobe with a pearl at its tip, and each plant having in addition two pendant pepper-like fruits. The principal design on each face of the capital

² H. Schlunk, "Byzantinische Bauplastik aus Spanien," *Madridener Mitteilungen*, 5 (1964), 234-54 (esp. 235-37, pls. 66-69). I am grateful to Professor Schlunk and the German Archaeological Institute for photographs, two of which are reproduced here (figs. 1 and 2).

³ *DOP*, 19 (1965), 234; 20 (1966), 228, 238.

⁴ R. M. Harrison, "The Sculptural Decoration of the Church of St. Polyeuktos," *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueología Cristiana, Barcelona, 1969* (Vatican-Barcelona, 1972), 324-25. I am grateful to Professor E. Ripoll and Dr. L. Vilaseca for their courtesy and help in the Museum, and to Professor R. Krautheimer and Miss A. Frantz, who were with me in the Museum when I first saw the capital and who encouraged me to include a statement on this identification in my paper to the Congress that afternoon. Miss Frantz very kindly took a set of photographs, one of which (fig. 3) is reproduced here.

¹ R. M. Harrison and N. Firatlı, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 19 (1965), 230-36; 20 (1966), 222-38; 21 (1967), 273-78; 22 (1968), 195-203; for the discovery and identification, C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, *DOP*, 15 (1961), 243-47.

consists of three superimposed cornucopiae set centrally, from each of which issue, splayed to right and to left, two elaborate sprigs of acanthus. The acanthus and much of the other carving is deeply underdrilled.

The corners of the capital have been badly damaged. Projecting bosses at the corners of the crown molding have in each case been smashed, and the twin stumps of cornucopiae above the base molding beneath each corner are evidence of elaborate openwork up each corner to support the boss. The vertical bands which formed the background to this openwork have, in three out of the four cases, been reworked as myrtle sprigs, and one of the broken bosses has been crudely re-worked as a human head. There has also been some reworking of the plants on the main panel and on the crown molding. The top surface of the capital has been hollowed out for use as a font.

The capital is clearly, as Schlunk recognized, Constantinopolitan work of the sixth century, but its importance lies in the fact that it can now be shown to antedate the "reife justinianische Zeit" to which he attributed it. Its intimate connection with carving from the church of St. Polyeuktos is indicated by the following correspondences:

1. *Material*. Both capital and church elements are of Proconnesian marble.

2. *Dimensions*. The Barcelona capital is 0.92 m. high; the height of one pier capital from Saraçhane is 0.93 m.,⁵ that of another pier capital 0.90 m.⁶ The lower diameter of the Barcelona capital is 0.57–0.58 m., that of a column capital from Saraçhane 0.58 m.⁷

3. *Form*. Like the Barcelona capital,⁸ the Saraçhane pier capitals have (or had) projecting corner bosses supported by openwork which sprang from pairs of cornucopiae.⁸

4. *Technique*. Like the Barcelona capital, the Saraçhane sculpture is distinguished by deep undercutting with the drill at an angle of about 45° and by expert chisel work for naturalistic leaves with raised veins.

⁵ *DOP*, 21, p. 276 and fig. 13 (date palm capital).

⁶ *DOP*, 19, p. 234 and figs. 8–11 (capital of 'pilastri acritani' type).

⁷ *DOP*, 21, p. 276 and fig. 14 (split-palmette capital).

⁸ Clearly visible in *DOP*, 19, "Saraçhane," figs. 8–11; and 21, "Saraçhane," fig. 11.

5. *Decoration*. (a) The base molding, with alternating eggs and leaves, occurs at Saraçhane on a fragment of a column capital⁹ and the distinctive ornament of a Latin cross in relief on each egg is found on a Saraçhane pier capital.¹⁰ (b) Saraçhane has produced, amongst its many fragments, a number of large cornucopiae and eighty-five five-lobed acanthus leaves, which resemble those on the principal panels of the Barcelona capital and are so far unattributable to any of the more substantial Saraçhane pieces. (c) Saraçhane has, moreover, produced ten pieces of the distinctive Barcelona crown-molding decoration, five of them with remains of a corner boss (and thus from capitals), and one of these five retaining part of a five-lobed acanthus leaf from the main panel. The ten pieces are as follows:

(i) Two joining fragments (inventory nos. 4449, 10744) of upper left-hand corner of capital, unfinished; upper border with half plant on left, two whole plants, and pendant fruit of fourth plant (broken) on right, above five-lobed acanthus leaf in main panel. The pattern has been drilled but the background not yet struck away; the surface is smooth, with no indication yet of veins. Height 0.216, overall length 0.285 m. (fig. 4).

(ii) Corner fragment (no. 7006), with broken boss and end plant of upper border preserved on each side. Height 0.17, length of longer side 0.31 m. (fig. 5).

(iii) Corner fragment (no. 9042), with broken boss and part of upper border preserved on each side; on one side the plants are slender and deeply underdrilled, on the other more chunky and in shallow relief. Height 0.14, length of drilled side 0.23 m. (fig. 6).

(iv) Fragment (no. 4911) of upper border with part of one plant. Height 0.125, length 0.13 m. (fig. 7).

(v) Fragment (no. 4841) of upper border with part of one plant. Height 0.11, length 0.12 m. (fig. 7).

⁹ Two joining pieces (inventory nos. 3648 and 3721) of lower border with eggs and trilobate leaves; above, stump of cornucopia and broken leaf tips appropriate to a capital of Barcelona type. Height 0.145, length 0.295, estimated diameter 0.60 m.

¹⁰ Date palm capital (note 5 *supra*).

(vi) Fragment (no. 10745) of upper border with part of one plant. Height 0.11, length 0.14 m.

(vii) Fragment (no. 10746) of upper border with parts of two plants; tooling on top surface indicates this is near upper left corner of capital. Height 0.12, length 0.157 m.

(viii) Corner fragment (no. 4205) with two underdrilled plants to right of broken boss, badly preserved traces of chunkily cut plant to left. Height 0.16, length of right face 0.23 m.

(ix) Corner fragment (no. 5208), with broken boss and trace of end plant to left. Height 0.155 m.

The best stratified piece is (i) (no. 4449), which was found in a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century context in the northeast sector of the atrium; (iv) and (v) are from a seventeenth-century context and (ii) from a modern context in the same general area, and (iii) from a modern context within the narthex substructure; the rest are unstratified.

The church of St. Polyeuktos appears to have fallen into disuse about the year 1000 and collapsed (or was destroyed) about 1200.¹¹ Architectural items from the church were carried off to Venice after the Fourth Crusade, and presumably the Barcelona capital was also removed in the thirteenth century.¹²

This capital with its horizontally splayed luxuriant acanthus gives a strong hint of what was to be achieved a decade later in the capitals of St. Sophia. The evidence for tradition and continuity in Proconnesian quarries and Constantinopolitan marble yards is growing, and there is no need to follow the *Patria* in claiming foreign sculptors for the church of St. Polyeuktos.¹³ Expert marble working demands long apprenticeship, and, if there are changes in repertory and style,

¹¹ *DOP*, 21, p. 275.

¹² It is first recorded in the church of San Miguel in Barcelona, then in that of La Merced, and was transferred to the Archaeological Museum in 1936; for bibliography, see Schlunk, "Byzantinische Bauplastik aus Spanien," note 5, but add D. M. Almagro *et al.*, *Museo Arqueológico de Barcelona* (Madrid, 1955), 19, who correctly attributed this to sixth-century Constantinople and added: "Seguramente producto del botín de las tropas catalanoaragonesas en Oriente durante el siglo XIII."

¹³ *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitarum*, ed. Th. Preger, II (Leipzig, 1907), 237; cf. Mango and Ševčenko, *DOP*, 15, p. 245.

these are in response to patron, market, and fashion. The church of St. Polyeuktos was surely decorated by a major Constantinopolitan "school", which later worked in St. Sophia and which was also responsible for other monuments both in the city and in the provinces. An example of the former is a pair of capitals with richly inhabited vine scrolls discovered recently at Ayvan Saray (Blachernae),¹⁴ an example of the latter the little-known fragment of a colossal capital in the Archaeological Museum at Constanța (figs. 8, 9).¹⁵

Finally, it may be convenient to provide here a list of the *disiecta membra* of the church of St. Polyeuktos which have so far been identified:

(i) The column capital in Barcelona discussed here.

(ii) The two piers and capitals in the Piazzetta in Venice.¹⁶

(iii) Screens in the Zeyrek Camii (Pantocrator) in Istanbul.¹⁷

(iv) Panel from Koca Mustafa Paşa Camii (St. Andrew in Krisei) in Istanbul.¹⁸

(v) A pier fragment from Fenari Isa Camii (Monastery of Lips) in Istanbul.¹⁹

(vi) The body of a peacock from Topkapı Sarayı in Istanbul.²⁰

¹⁴ To be published by Dr. N. Firatlı, who kindly showed them to me in the Archaeological Museum. A capital from the Hebdomon, also in the Museum (no. 4850), is an even clearer product of this "school."

¹⁵ V. Canarache, *The Archaeological Museum of Constantza* (Bucharest [1968?]), illus. p. 31 (Museum no. 4848). The capital, of Proconnesian marble, is broken above, below, and behind; its present upper width is *ca.* 1.52, its height *ca.* 0.36, its depth 0.60 m. The large leaves springing from beneath what appears to be the lower limb of a central cross may be compared with those beneath canthari on the St. Polyeuktos piers in Venice (cf., e.g., M. Kalligas, *Oi πέσσοι τῆς Πτολεμαίδος*, in *Ἀρχαιολογική Ἑφημερίς* [1938, publ. 1940], 74). For the two photographs published here I am indebted to Dr. B. Brenk.

¹⁶ Cf. note 3 *supra*.

¹⁷ *DOP*, 21, p. 276 and fig. 12.

¹⁸ *DOP*, 20, p. 228 and fig. 15 (Istanbul, Arch. Mus. no. 4428).

¹⁹ C. Mango, E. J. W. Hawkins, *DOP*, 22 (1968), 178.

²⁰ J. Ebersolt, *Mission archéologique de Constantinople* (Paris, 1921), 4 and pl. xxiv, 3 (Ht. [including neck] 0.34, l. 0.41 m.).

It seems probable, too, that the split-palmette capitals in the west façade of San Marco in Venice are also from Saraçhane,²¹

as also perhaps is the similar but badly damaged capital (no. 179) in the St. Sophia garden.²²

²¹ *DOP*, 21, p. 276 and fig. 14; also 22, p. 199.

²² Brought to my attention by Dr. Firath.



1. Barcelona, Archaeological Museum. Capital (No. 7542)

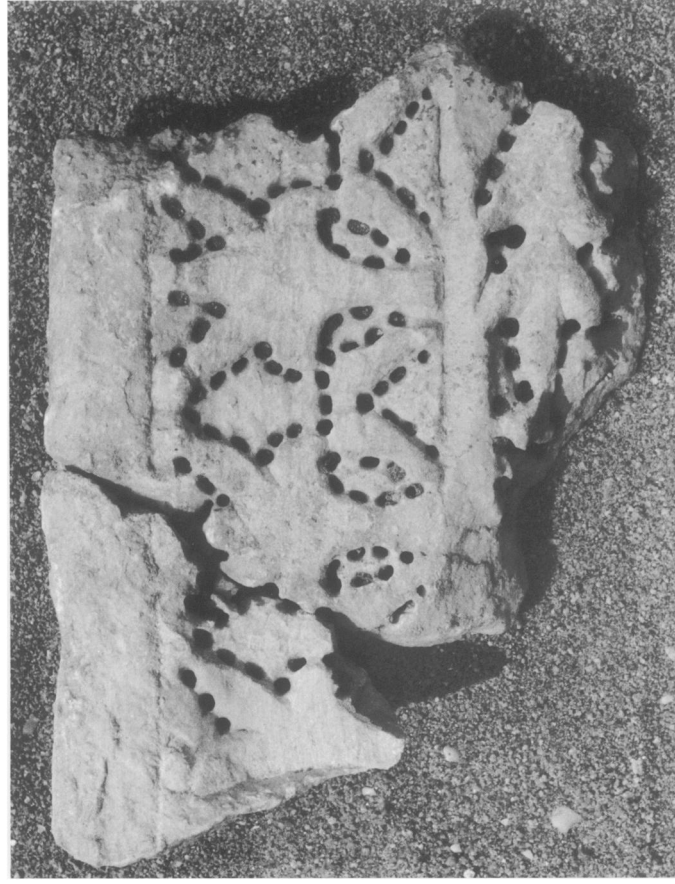


2. Another View



3. Detail

Capital in Figure 1



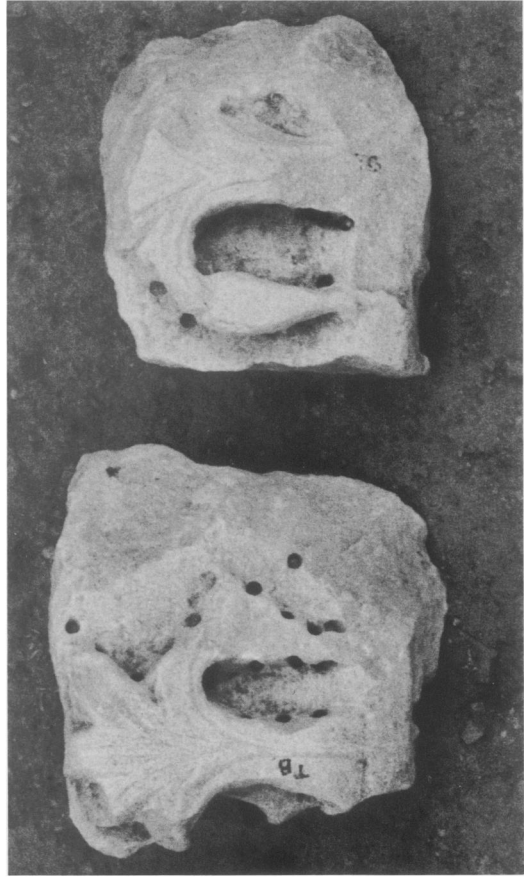
4. Saraçhane Fragments Nos. 4449 (left) and 10744 (right)



5. Saraçhane Fragment No. 7006



6. Saraçhane Fragment No. 9042



7. Saraçhane Fragments Nos. 4911 (left) and 4841 (right)



8. Capital (No. 4848)



9. Detail

Constanța, Archaeological Museum